N°. XI.

THE

THESPIAN MIRROR.

SATURDAY EVENING, MARCH 8, 1806.

MRS. MELMOTH.

A gentleman who is well acquainted with the history of Mrs. MELMOTH, has furnished us with the following circumstances relative to her life, in addition to the cursory sketch published in our 7th number: at the same time, assuring us that the remark extracted from the *Thespian Dictionary*, relative to her religious professions, is altogether unfounded.

Mrs. MELMOTH, says our correspondent, is the daughter of a respectable farmer, of *Surrey* (England). Mr. PRATT, who visited the place of her nativity on business, here met, and became attached to her: and having a living wife, he assumed the name of *Melmoth*, and disguisedly obtained her affections, and her hand. It was not till some time after their marriage, that the deception was discovered: And the developement of the circumstance brought a *delirium* on the lady, who after a long illness, recovered; separated herself from her husband and embraced the theatrical profession. She performed at *Edinburgh* in 1776, under the patronage of Messrs. *Diggs and Ross*; and afterwards became a great favourite in *Dublin*. Since her removal to *America*, she has kept a reputable private boarding house; and has, in every respect, been esteemed for her exemplary conduct and moral rectitude. She is now playing at *Philadelphia*.

Fugitive Lucubrations.

NO. V.

Bob Helicon's Prose.

Mr. Editor,

My friend *Bob* feeling, rather hurt that your fair readers should be led to think him capable only of making *verses*, has furnished me with a specimen of his *prose*.

It is perhaps a misfortune to the literary world that the *critic*, as if *omnium Consensu*, is himself exempt from criticism. *Satire* has sometimes ventured a glance at these annoyers of public quiet; but conscious that *union* serves to give weight to censure, and plausibility to remark, they array themselves in an impenetrable Phalanx, and move in one terrific column. Your readers therefore, Mr. Editor, will not wonder that my friend *Bob* (who has more than once felt the severity of their fire) should address himself in the following *penitential* apostrophe.

TO MODERN CRITICS.

Awful Arbiters of taste! Knights of the rule and compass! Defenders of literary faith! Admit into your puissant lists a deserter from the entrenchments of the enemy! Burning with repentant zeal, he wishes to enlist under your banners. He once imagined that walls and bulwarks which had resisted the inclemency of ages, would have stood forever. Pernicious expectation! they are rapidly falling beneath your irresistible prowess. HOMER the ablest general in the camp, I left skulking behind a broken parapet to avoid your shot; and his adjutants, HORACE, VIRGIL and LONGINUS, consulting behind the remnant of a block house, as to the necessity of an immediate surrender. SHAKSPEARE fell in one of your first attacks, although ably supported by generals JOHNSON, THEOBALD and GARRICK, who covered him with their bodies, and hazarded their lives in his defence. General ANACREON indeed, being a *high liver*, and continually *drunk*, is rash enough still to shew his head above the parapet. He has been furnished with a new suit of regimentals by his aid brigadier MOORE, with a view to make him popular at camp; but it only serves to expose him more effectually to your shot, and he is drest like a *victim* for the *slaughter*. The enemy cannot possibly hold out much longer; and, indeed were they in a condition to protract the surrender, you have it in your power to spring a mine in the very bosom of their entrenchments. Several *females in disguise* are said to be hovering round the outposts of the enemy, making interest with the subalterns, and procuring for their own use the spoils of the deceased generals. These, with an herd of adherents whom the commanding officers exclude from

the lines, will be devoted to your service; indeed it is whispered that they are already in your pay, and even that DELLA CRUSCA, WOLSTONECRAFT, ROBINSON, and some others, have been, through your artifices, privately introduced into the enemy's camp, and from the waning reputation of the surviving generals, are likely soon to have the *chief command*. In such a case, the victory is yours; and you must be sensible most worthy and valiant! of the glory with which you will eventually be encircled by the assent of an ameliorated world. How science will exult in your triumph; and smiling on the ruins which were once the strongholds of *Homer* and *his coadjutors*, will rear amid the shapeless desolation, a trophy, sacred to *modern taste*, and decorated with the *evergreen wreath* of *sonnets, acrostics, madrigals, rebuses, conundrums* and *impromptus!*

BOB. HELICON.

I could have wished my friend HEL—— (as I sometimes familiarly call him) to have been less severe. But apology for his own extravagancies is task enough for any writer; let others take heed of theirs.

B.

The American Stage.

*Imitatio vitæ, speculum consuetudinis, imago veritatis.....*Cicero.
The Imitation of Life...the Mirror of Manners...the Transcript of Truth.

THEATRICAL REGISTER.

"'Tis with our judgments, as our watches....none
"Go just alike....but each believes his own."

MONDAY, MARCH 3.

Abaellino (Dunlap)—*Tars from Tripoli* (Dibdin and Charnock.)—For the benefit of Mr. Charnock.

Abaellino was sustained by Mr. BARRETT; a part which *he* is said to esteem his *chef d'ouvre*. It may be so; but we have seen much better playing Mrs. VILLIERS, who acted *Rosamunda*, has partially corrected the disagreeable manner of speaking, noticed in our last. Mr. MARTIN in *Parozzi* was too tame. Mr. HOGG's *Memmo* discovered a rich vein of dry humour. Mr. ROBINSON merits encouragement and *promotion*.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 5.

Hamlet (Shakspeare)—*All the World's a Stage* (Jackman). *Hamlet—Mr. Cooper.*

Wednesday evening introduced to us, the long expected Mr. COOPER, in the character of *Hamlet*, whose appearance was welcomed by reite-

rated bursts of applause. The house was not so crouded as we had anticipated, probably owing to the apprehensions which many entertained of a *squeeze*; and the early forestalment of the boxes.

Criticism has almost exhausted her stores on this eminent Tragedian; applause has encircled him with her incense, and beauty with her smiles. When he enters, the house echoes: when he speaks, it is hushed: and when he weeps, it is in tears. "Attention mute," is surely the highest tribute which can be paid to the powers of an actor; and it has seldom been denied to Mr. COOPER. Although on this occasion, applause was not profuse, nor admiration general, yet do we not recollect to have witnessed a silence more profound and interesting, than that which accompanied the utterance of some of the most impressive passages of his performance.

We scarcely know whether to lament a cold, under which Mr. COOPER laboured during the whole of the evening: For although it in some measure affected the distinctness and music of his utterance, (particularly of the lower tones, and those used for, "engendering awe and horror";) yet it served to deter him from the ill habit of ranting, and gave additional nerve to his genius, by the embarrassments which it put in its way. The fatigues of his recent journey, however, threw into his acting, a degree of languor, which sensibly injured, though it destroyed not its effect.

We have seen Mr. COOPER happier in the interview with his Father's Spirit,* but when the shade is summoned to his "prison house," and has vanished from his distracted son—

——"Remember thee?
Ay thou poor ghost, while memory holds a seat
In this distracted globe. Remember thee?
Yea, from the table of my memory
I'll wipe away all trivial fond records;
All saws of books, all forms, all pressures past,
That youth and observation copied there
And thy commandment all alone shall live,
Within the book and volume of my brain
Unmix'd with baser matter"——

Was uttered with a *pathos* which found its way to every heart. We cannot avoid noticing a resemblance which this beautiful passage bears to a sentence of the Jewish Bard, who had hung his harp upon the willows, and thus wept the sufferings of his country:

"If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, may my right hand forget its cunning.—If I do not remember *thee*, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth" &c.

"My father's spirit in arms!—All is not well!"

was uttered with an ominous and boding horror:—And impatience for

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* *We heard a gentleman, in speaking of* KEMBLE'S *personation of this character, observe—that when the ghost appears to* Hamlet, *by a sudden motion of the shoulder or neck, his cap falls to the ground—and that the effect was fine. The* Young Roscius, *in his address to his father's spirit, proceeding in a tremulous voice to "I'll call the King*—father,"—*at this word he slowly prostrates himself—this last circumstance is a very happy addition, and its effect, if performed by a person of such finished grace and dignity as* Mr. COOPER, *must be irresistible.*

the interview, mingled with a superstitious dread, were strongly depicted in Mr. C.'s

"Would the night were come!"

But we cannot pronounce him faultless in the close of this soliloquy.

"Till then—sit still my soul!"

should have been spoken in a deep and somewhat imperative tone, to give effect to the gleam of expectation which follows. The *parenthesis* was not sufficiently marked in

——"Foul deeds will rise

(Tho' the whole earth o'erwhelm them) to men's eyes."

The play of *Hamlet* abounds with *irony*, in the management of which Mr. COOPER is most happy. His interview with the player, was judicious: and many passages of his instructions to the buskin'd hero, from their forcible application, in these "*degenerate days*," excited considerable applause: We hope the advice, will not be disregarded by the Thespian *Corps-e.**

Ophelia, may thank the bold avenger of his Father's "bleeding wrongs," for no small amelioration of his *severity* in

"Get thee to a nunnery—to a nunnery—go—go"—

Mr. COOPER has very wisely tempered the whole of this interview with a mildness, which is not only more grateful to the feelings of the audience, but probably more consonant with the intentions of the poet. We are happy to notice that *methodical mark of madness*, the "*black and white leg*", at length discarded.

Mrs JONES in *Ophelia*, was tender and interesting. Her air of madness, thrilled us by its plaintive and starting melodies; and left us soothed into

——"Melting melancholy."

Mr. HALLAM's gesticulation and varied tones of speaking in the *active* Ghost, were, in our opinion somewhat ill judged.

Mrs. BARRET's *Queen Mother* was considerably overdone, and by no means equal to her former representation of the same character.

Mr. HALLAM jun. as *Laertes* was very deficient in

——"A quality

Wherein they say he shone."——

We turn him over to the tutelage of Mr. BARRET, whose dexterity and skill in fencing, may in time render the brother of the "sweet Ophelia," a fit competitor for the Danish prince.

In Mr. HOGO's excellent, and truly humorous *Diggory*, consisted the support of the afterpiece.

FRIDAY, MARCH 7.

Richard III, (Shakspeare)—*Spoil'd Child* (Mrs. Jordan).

The play was SHAKSPEARE's—the acting COOPER's.....each of which are superior in their respective departments. We were prevented by indisposition from attending the theatre, but we have heard Mr. COOPER's *Richard* spoken of in the most unqualified terms of praise.

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* *Not being fond of* gallicisms, *we have added a letter to make this word* plain English.

It would greatly assist our players who are so frequently incorrect, and facilitate the uninterrupted progress of their performances, was an audience-covered *memorandum box* for the *prompter* (that indispensable *machine* in the present day) raised after the manner of the French theatres, about *two feet*, between the centre of the stage and the orchestra. This arrangement would enable the actors to receive the full benefit of the *memory helper's* (at present *too loud*) *whispers*, without pacing almost behind the scenes for the *catch word*.

MR. COOPER.

[*The following remarks are transcribed from a letter written by a Lady, and received from* Boston. *They need no comment:—They are forcible, and, according to our best information, perfectly correct.*

CURIOSITY, I acknowledge to have been my only motive for attending the representation of HENRY IV. it is a play in which I feel little interest. *Falstaff*, as Dr. JOHNSON says "the unimitated the inimitable *Falstaff*" was exhibited by our innately delicate, and admired COOPER with an *effect* that proves he can indeed "*frame* himself to all occasions." His disguise of person, and voice were complete; there were but two very trifling instances, though I observed him with *minute* attention during the piece, wherein I could discover a *trace* of what we had been accustomed to see in Cooper. In his soliloquy on honor—where he says, "will it stick by you?—no—*detraction* will not let it live;" here, and where he dwells on the *Ha!!* in the same soliloquy I discovered that voice which we welcome with delight—the full, flexible and impressive tones which make part of the exquisite powers of that distinguished actor.——Though by address he succeeds in playing (I presume) the exact *Falstaff* of SHAKSPEARE, yet I could not see his metamorphosis without a sigh.—To believe that this was the being placed so high in refinement—who had so often delighted, and astonished us—transformed into a very brute; gave an excitement to our feelings of so unpleasant a kind as to render it even *painful* to see the character in its best style represented by the same person.——I hope *Cooper* in future will leave *Falstaff* to the line of *Bernard*, *Bates*, &c. and keep to the dignity of Tragedy and the impressive scenes of sentimental Comedy where he *shines* by displaying gifts which are intuitively his own.

The Gamester, a domestic tragedy, (the part of Beverly) COOPER has played here of late with great success. In this he has harrowed souls and wrung many a tear from the stoutest hearts. With painful regret the lovers of the Drama have bid their favorite adieu.—But we *hope* his return. He has left behind him testimonials of talents—joined with the accomplishments of a thoroughly well bred man which will insure him a welcome, as an *actor* and a GENTLEMAN.

MR. FENNEL.

[*From the* THEATRICAL CENSOR, *of Philadelphia, a work of acknowledged utility to the dramatic world, we select the following remarks on the acting of* Mr. FENNEL. *They are equally elegant, just and appropriate.*

"So much nonsense has come from the mouths and pens of Mr. Fennel's worshippers (to use a term more appropriate than admirers) that we feel it to be the duty of the *Theatrical Censor* to speak distinctly to the merits of this gentleman. Mr. Fennel has from nature a good person, and (perhaps, we should say from Nature also, as well as) from education, a good carriage. There is a grace in his gesture, resulting (to speak technically) from this, that his limbs describe arches of circles, where those of men, whom we call stiff, awkward, or ungain, make angles. Add to this, if his voice be not altogether what might be wished, he has, to counterbalance this defect, a good delivery; and this is a charm which softens the impression of many imperfections. He speaks correctly, and like a gentleman; a merit, this last, which is one of the rarest to be found on any stage. He can be calm, and he can be energetic. In what then can he be wanting? If the whole of the evidence upon which our judgment is to be formed be before us, he is wanting in pathos, feeling, enthusiasm. We do but transcribe the series of feelings that have actually passed in our own breasts, when we say, how often,—with our eye fixed upon him and satisfied, with our ear not unpleased with the language in his mouth, with our heart prepared to swell with the expanding sentiment—has all ended in disappointment,

——flat, stale, and unprofitable!

A thousand times has he forced into our recollection the reproach of *Macbeth*, on them

That keep the word of promise to the ear,
And break it to our hope.

There is in such acting as this, that false fulness, of which, in fine paintings of flowers, it has been exquisitely remarked, that they are to the eye all-perfect, but want, when we approach them, the life, the odour!"

THEATRICAL INTELLIGENCE.

At Mr. COOPER's last benefit in Boston, he personated the character of Sir *John Fallstaff*, in Shakspeare's Henry IV. The Theatre we understand, was crouded to an overflow. The third tier, or green boxes, were filled with the most genteel company, and the prices of admission raised to a dollar. The Indian Chiefs, and their interpreter, late in this City, visited the Theatre on that occasion.

Mr. COOPER next week plays *Macbeth*, (on Monday) *Othello* (on Wednesday,) and *Beverly*, (Gamester, on Friday Evening.)

Poetry.

[*The following eminently beautiful stanzas which appeared without a signature shortly after the event to which they refer, we now present to our readers with alterations by the author. They are throughout descriptive and sublime—the closing figure is bold and original, and the republication of the ode will we think contribute to render perpetual the memory of an event which has deprived America of a* HERO *and the world of a* MAN.

ODE

(WRITTEN AFTER WITNESSING THE FUNERAL OBSEQUIES OF GENERAL HAMILTON.)

Hark! how the passing bell
Heaves to the gale its sullen swell!
And lo in sorrow's pomp array'd,
To the dull beat of death,
The slowly moving cavalcade!
The half suspended breath
Scarce frees the struggling sigh,
And hallow'd tears bedew mute beauty's eye.
Now o'er the mansions of the dead
With slowly solemn, measur'd tread,
Around their slumb'ring HERO drawn,
The silent soldiers print the lawn.
Nor the long blaze
Arrests the gaze!
The hollow vaults resound!
The blazing sky:
The thund'ring ground,
The piercing eye,
More eloquent than pity's flow,
Proclaim the soldier's *manly* woe.
High o'er the scene the curling cloud aspires;
Fraught with a nation's fervid sighs,
The mighty incense seeks the skies,
And tells astonish'd worlds a HAMILTON expires.

LODINUS.

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